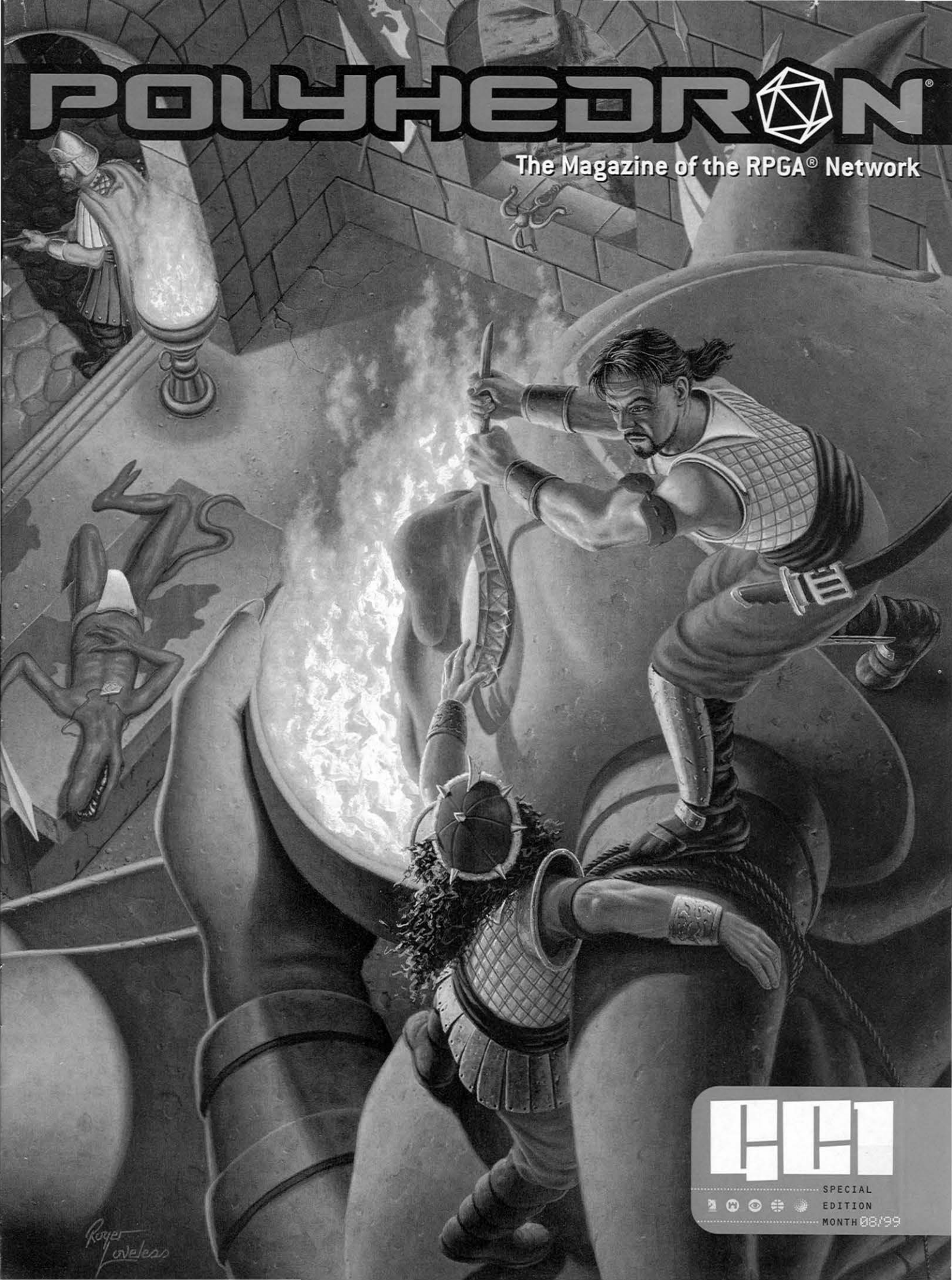
POLYHEDRON®
The Magazine of the RPGA® Network
Roger Loveless
CC1
SPECIAL
EDITION
MONTH 08/99

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SO WHAT IS THIS RPGA THING, ANYWAY?

We're happy you're interested in the RPGA® Network, the largest and best role-playing organization in the world. The Network promotes role-playing in all its forms and provides activity centers for members to engage in this terrific hobby. Members play the best games with the best players all around the world. Through this organization, you can get in touch with others who share your interests in playing, designing, and collecting games and adventures. Network members advocate the spread of role-playing, render service to the community, and teach role-playing games to others, sharing their enjoyment of the hobby.

RPGA offers two levels of membership, so you can choose the one that best fits what you want out of the role-playing experience.

FELLOWSHIP-LEVEL™ MEMBERSHIP

This level of membership is FREE to any interested person. It is a great way to try out what the Network has to offer and see if you want to upgrade to the next level. FELLOWSHIP-LEVEL members can:

- Play or judge any sanctioned Network adventure. This includes adventures at conventions, retail store locations, online, and anywhere else you find RPGA-sanctioned games. When you play in sanctioned roleplaying events, you receive points toward an international roleplaying ranking which works similarly to class levels in the D&D game. The more points you have, the higher your level. FELLOWSHIP-LEVEL members can rise as high as second level.

GUILD-LEVEL™ MEMBERSHIP

The second level of membership is called GUILD-LEVEL membership. All Network activities and privileges are available to GUILD-LEVEL members for a cost of US$20 per year (United States, costs elsewhere vary and you should check the Branch office for details). For that payment, GUILD-LEVEL members receive:

- All benefits of FELLOWSHIP-LEVEL membership. In addition, GUILD-LEVEL members can advance their player and judge rankings in the international ranking system to any level. Special adventures are available for Masters (3rd), Grand Masters (5th), and Paragon (7th) level members, but you must be a GUILD-LEVEL member to play them.
- One-year subscription to POLYHEDRON® Magazine (currently 6 issues), the Network's own magazine. POLYHEDRON is filled with Network news, gaming articles, and announcements of conventions running Network adventures. Ed Greenwood of FORGOTTEN REALMS® fame writes a regular column on the Border Kingdoms which you cannot find elsewhere. LIVING campaign support can also be found within its pages. You are holding a representative sample of what you can find in POLYHEDRON in your very hands right now.
- A unique AD&D® adventure that is available only to GUILD-LEVEL members for the current year. The adventure which premieres at the 1999 GEN CON® Game Fair is *Wand of Archael* by Mike Selinker and Penny Williams, based on an original tournament by Robert Kindel.
- The opportunity to playtest TSR product as part of a Network Club
- Membership Handbook, telling you how to get involved. The handbook contains information on all our programs, and character creation instructions for our main LIVING campaigns.
- More stuff that we did not have room for on this page!

CAMPAIGN PLAY WITH RPGA NETWORK

RPGA presents adventures in two types, those for which characters are provided and those for which you can bring your own character. Adventures which allow you to bring a character are part of a LIVING campaign which allow members to develop characters as in home roleplaying campaigns. We have a variety of LIVING campaigns to choose from, with more coming all the time. GUILD-LEVEL members have more opportunities in these campaigns; in addition to adventures, there are Live-action games, organizations for characters to join, and other special activities that can help develop your character.

RPGA offers LIVING CITY™, the world's largest ongoing roleplaying campaign. Enter Ravens Bluff, a huge fantasy city in the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign, where your AD&D character can cut deals, fight evil-doers, find fame and fortune, and perhaps live to a ripe old age. Network members play their own characters in LIVING CITY events at conventions around the world. More than 3,000 active players participate in this campaign, and only the Network brings you a campaign on this scale.

For those looking for other options, the RPGA comes through. Check out LIVING JUNGLE™, a humanoid-based jungle AD&D campaign, where taboos and garuda and enigmatic witch doctors haunt your every step. Experience the gothic mystery and horror of LIVING DEATH™. Set in the 1890s, this campaign uses the RAVENLOFT® *Masque of the Red Death* world. Journey across the globe as a member of a secret qabal fighting the evil of the Red Death. Run the shadows with VIRTUAL SEATTLE, Shadowrun's LIVING campaign. Street sams, wage mages, physical adepts, assassins, shamans, deckers, and more await you just out of sight. Take the role of an outsider without an official identity and try to survive in VIRTUAL SEATTLE.

This Game Fair marks the launch of our newest LIVING campaign, LIVING VERGE™ for the ALTERNITY® Science-fiction Roleplaying Game. RPGA has a star system in the Verge, the setting for the STAR*DRIVE® products. Try this new game, and help contribute to building a whole star system!

Next year the RPGA will present shared world campaigns on a new scale, with our LIVING GREYHAWK™ campaign. The entire world of Greyhawk has been given to the RPGA to develop and play in. This campaign will feature regional mapping of the world of Greyhawk, the core AD&D game world, onto the real world. The opportunities are limitless for GUILD-LEVEL members to play, run games, and develop the world of Greyhawk.

COMMUNITY

RPGA helps you enter the community of roleplayers. You have a regional director assigned to help you where you live. You can find other members and join their games by contacting your regional director. Network-sanctioned clubs add even more to your membership, as clubs receive extra benefits and opportunities.

Come by the RPGA tower in the Wizards exhibit booth, or the RPGA events area in the Arena. We'll be happy to set you up to enjoy the fun we have to offer. ■

notes from HQ

ADVENTURING FOR THE FUTURE

The Cordon Bleu
TSR, Inc.

Maitre D'
Ryan Dancey

Head Waiter
Robert Wiese

Reservations
Game Support (800) 324-6496

Chefs
Donna Woodcock
Mark Painter

Busboy
Sean Glenn

WELCOME TO HELL

Now that we have your attention, we can relieve you by saying that we mean this in a positive way. The RPGA's theme for this year is "The Inferno" by Dante, and we are gearing up to show you one hellacious good time. As you may know, the theme of "The Inferno" is the journey through hell that Dante undertook with his guide, Virgil. Just like Virgil, we will guide you through layer after layer of our program, each building on the previous ones. In a sense we are actually working our way upward, but "The Paradiso" just does not grab the attention the way hell does. So think hell in reverse (getting better with each layer rather than worse), and you will be on the right track.

We always try to bring you new and exciting every year, and this year is no different. With over 50 tournaments, live-action roleplaying, and several championships, we are sure to have something exciting for you. Plus we have partnered with other programs throughout the Game Fair's busy schedule to bring you high quality events where you may not expect to see RPGA active. So watch your step, and follow as we guide you through the many layers of the Network's offering this year. There is not room here to list all the tournament descriptions, so you will have to get the GEN CON pre-reg book from Andon Unlimited at 800-529-EXPO.

gen con RPGA activities

1ST LAYER: WIZARDS' EXHIBIT BOOTH

Crossing the River Acheron, we find ourselves at the WIZARDS OF THE COAST exhibit booth. There, the friendly RPGA staff and volunteers will be running demonstrations of the ALTERNITY® Science-fiction Roleplaying Game, and the MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ Game. This is a chance to learn ALTERNITY before playing in our LIVING VERGE™ events, or playing for a little while in the Dungeon of Doom. All GUILD-LEVEL™ RPGA members will receive a special 25th anniversary printing of *I6: Ravenloft* just for being members, in addition to all the other great benefits you receive. Visit the booth and pick up yours.

2ND LAYER: TOURNAMENT PLAY

The mainstay of the RPGA program is always the many tournaments we run. We choose the best events by our best writers, and find the best judges we can. RPGA events are the best roleplaying events at the show, bar none. A complete listing follows, and we are sure that you will find enough to give you pleasure for the whole weekend. For RPGA tournaments, the Network will be awarding $5 coupon prizes for the winners of all events.

AD&D® Benefit, one-round adventure. *Wand of Archael* by Mike Selinker and Penny Williams, based on an original tournament by Robert Kindel. Greyisle is a land caught in a whirlwind of magical strife. It is the battleground between two powerful cartels of wizards, the Mages of the Red Cabal and the Celestial Order. A coup by the Mages of the Red Cabal has resulted in the loss of Archael, chief wizard among the Celestial Order. The Order wants you to recover his lost wand from the Red Mages, or the Order could be doomed. This adventure is a preview of the RPGA's 1999 annual adventure. Double RPGA experience points. RPGA Club Decathlon event.

AD&D Feature, three-round elimination. *A Pirate's Life* by Tim White, Daniel Llewellyn, and Jeff Bull. The kingdom of Bareng suffers under a hideously evil rule. The means to put it to an end may be close by, but to find them you must seek out pirates and a missing princess. Will you be ready to face the evil of Bareng? The fate of the whole Realms may be at stake. Standard RPGA experience points.

AD&D Masters, two-round elimination. *Gifts of the Heart* by Rembert Parker. You've arrived after the dragon has been slain, but there's still a damsel in extreme distress! This is the introductory adventure to The Human Equation, a series of adventures that mark Rembert's return to RPGA events. A two-round AD&D adventure for six totally human characters of level 3-4. RPGA members 3rd level and above only, triple RPGA experience points.

AD&D Grand Masters, one-round adventure. *A Fine Specimen* by Greg Dreher and Steve Hardinger. "Now take a look at these animals. They're fine specimens, aren't they? They were just brought in from the mountains by an associate of mine." "The mountains? With all those marauding orc tribes? Wasn't that dangerous?" "Oh, not at all, not for my associate." "But aren't you worried about the druids? They might confront you." "Oh, I'm SURE they won't be doing anything...." RPGA members 5th level and above only, quadruple RPGA experience points.

AD&D Paragon, one-round adventure. *Aw Dad* by Jason Olsen. The wrath of Zeus can be terrible to behold, for everyone but his sons that is. But the irrationality of Zeus is famous, and that is what gets you into trouble this time. How to overcome Zeus' anger and yet stay alive? From 1993.RPGA members 7th level and above only, quintuple RPGA experience points.

AD&D Replay, one-round adventure. *Parlynne's Lost Gem* by Rembert Parker. The bard Parlynne has a simple quest left undone: find the last gem that fits in her magical harp. She believes that she can recover some elusive magic of music for the world if the harp can be made whole again. The missing gem leads you through forest and into places you did not expect to go. This event last played in 1991. Standard RPGA experience points.

AD&D Special, one-round adventure. *The Rescue of Maid Marian* by Ratty. Become Robin Hood or one of his merry men in this dashing adventure. Maid Marian is endangered by the Sheriff of Nottingham, and Robin and crew must come to her rescue! Standard RPGA experience points.

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AD&D LIVING JUNGLE Feature, one-round adventure. Necromancer's Stone by Tom Prusa. The earthshakes get worse, and now the greatest heroes of Malatra call you in to find the long lost Necromancer's Stone to stop them. This is an adventure for builing courage, to be sure. Everyone is relying on you. An adventure for low-level and mid-level heroes. Standard RPGA experience points.

AD&D LIVING JUNGLE Extreme, one-round adventure. *Monkey City* by Robert Wiese. A pack of garuda attacking the Huroola lead the heroes of Malatra on a strange journey of discovery into their past. What secrets will they find, and how will these secrets affect the future of Malatra? An adventure for mid-level and high-level heroes. Standard RPGA experience points.

Dark Conspiracy Feature, one-round adventure. *Thoughts Run Wild* by Geoff Skellams. In the not too distant future, society's values have collapsed. The rich live in glittering towers while the poor live in the slums of the decaying suburbs. It's so bad that even the paramedics need weapons to protect themselves when they go out on the streets. Sometimes, people's minds don't cope with the stress of modern life. They need to get some serious help and sometimes, you're the one who has to go out into the urban wilderness to find them. Standard RPGA experience points.

Earthdawn Threads of Legend Feature, one-round adventure. *Twisiting Through a Fountain's Screams* by Steve Bach and Mary Zalapi. Join this latest episode in Threads of Legend, and build your hero's fame and glory in the realm of Barsaive. Standard RPGA experience points.

ICE Run Out the Guns, two-round elimination. *Brethren of the Coast Raid-a-thon* by ICE Staff. Come and join the Brethren of the Coast for another year of raiding and pillaging. Bring your existing Brethren character or create one on the spot (takes only 15 minutes!). And the best part, matey, is that you can play in as many first rounds as you wish with the same character! Standard RPGA experience points.

Rolemaster Feature, three-round team elimination. *Shadow in Hope* by John Curtis III. In secret, you have been approached by two Council members from the City of Hope. It seems that the dwarven councilman's son (and heir) was found dead. Your discreet team of dwarves, goblins, and a human must discover what happened before it is too late! Standard RPGA experience points.

SAGA® DRAGONLANCE®: FIFTH AGE® Feature, one-round adventure. *Hammer's Fall* by Nicky Rea, Carla Hollar & Jackie Cassada. The Heroes of Destiny must travel from the forests of Qualinesti to the mines of Garnet, where they unlock the riddle behind the Moonsteel Sword and its companion pieces. One man can stop them: Angar Moonsteel. Fifth in the Visions of Destiny campaign for Dragonlance 5th Age. Standard RPGA experience points.

SAGA DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE Special, one-round adventure. *Sirine's Song and Dragon's Breath* by Greg Detwiler. A group of heroes is lured by the wiles of a group of sirines and must help them defend their home against "the biggest dragon ever to live." This will take more than just the six heroes, and so a quest across Krynn begins.

SAGA MARVEL SUPER HEROES Feature, one-round adventure. *Pages of Doom* by Robert Wiese. Dr. Doom has unleashed yet another plot against the Fantastic Four. Or has he? This time, it seems that the arch enemy of all that is decent is working on the side of the angels. But then who is behind the kidnapping of Dr. Stephen Strange? Standard RPGA experience points.

Shadowrun Virtual Seattle Feature, one-round adventure. *Stolen Property* by Stephen Gabriel. A stolen sword introduces you to the society of the yakuza, the not-so-secret secret society of criminals from Japan. Why you were called in could be one of the most interesting mysteries of your career. Standard RPGA experience points.

Shadowrun Virtual Seattle Special, one-round adventure. *Body Farm*. Body snatching does not normally come into your line as a shadowrunner. Making bodies out of living beings, yes, but usually once dead you can leave them. Not this time. A journey into the dark underside of Seattle. Standard RPGA experience points.

Star Wars Feature, one-round adventure. *The Way of the Force* by Robert Wiese. A strange obelisk leads you to Calamari, the home world of the Mon Cals. Deep beneath the seas of that planet is a device which is linked to the Force, and which attracted the attention of the ancient Sith lords. With it, the Emperor could crush you with a thought. You must find it first. But the past catches up too, and you are not alone in your search for this strange artifact from the past. Part six in the Sayub Legend, a Star Wars "Warriors of the Republic" bring-a-character adventures. Standard RPGA experience points.

3RD LAYER: SPECIAL INTEREST TOURNAMENTS

Some of our events fell into groupings this year, and so if you have a special gaming interest you might want to check these out. That is, if we can get past Cerberus...

LIVING CITY™ EXTRAVAGANZA

This year's LIVING CITY program is better than ever. Tournaments and other special events combine to make the Game Fair the highlight of the year for LIVING CITY players.

AD&D LIVING CITY Benefit, one-round adventure. *The Witch of the Mists* by Ed Gibson. One of the more unusual calls for assistance you have encountered during your career as an adventurer in Ravens Bluff leads you to a meeting of The Fellowship of Exalted Adventurers. The Fellowship has fallen on tough times and your assistance is required to halt the declining membership. This is an adventure for heroes: mercenaries and other greed-driven characters are unlikely to enjoy the event. Double RPGA experience points.

AD&D LIVING CITY Exclusive, one-round adventure. *Heir Un-apparent* by Jeffrey Scott Meyers. Chief Prelate Relarn Dayspring searches for heirs of the blood of a famous Lathandrian paladin, and evil from the past stirs its head again. This event is a sequel to "Dark Lord, Morning Glory" which ran at last year's Game Fair. Standard RPGA experience points.

AD&D LIVING CITY Feature, one-round adventure. *The Lacquered Chest* by Lawrence Ramirez. You have been summoned to the Celestial Gateway Emporeum to investigate a strange antiquity, a lacquered chest of ancient Kara-Turan design. Will your actions lead you to honor or will you become an affront to the ancestors? Standard RPGA experience points.

AD&D LIVING CITY Masters, one-round adventure. *Challenge of the Children* by Stephanie Zuiderweg. The Children's Vocational School is having problems, and one of the children does not think that the investigation is proceeding quickly enough. Will you join her and seek out those who are kidnapping children from the school? Lots of roleplaying. RPGA members 3rd level and above only, triple RPGA experience points.

AD&D LIVING CITY High-level Underdark Adventure, one-round adventure. *The Isle of the End* by Dave Sreniawski. How the mighty have fallen. You have been put in

charge of the Ravens Deep beautification detachment. Our new svirfneblin ally, King Durglewrathinda Murgleishenblin, has expressed a desire to visit Ravens Deep and he will be here in less than a week! He is bringing with him several of his ministers to negotiate a Trade and Mutual Defense Treaty. Field Marshal Blacktree wants everything shipshape by the time the King gets here. However, an unlikely messenger arrives with a troubling dispatch. So much of clean-up detail; time to go back to work. This LIVING CITY adventure is for characters at least 7th level, and we recommend 9th level. Standard RPGA experience points.

AD&D LIVING CITY High-level Planar Adventure, one-round adventure. *Three Coins in a Well* by Erich Schmidt. This is the second adventure in the high level planar campaign for LIVING CITY, and the campaign is so new that at press time we did not know completely what this module would be about. The planar expansion offers an alternative for those characters who would not like to adventure in the Underdark, and is for characters at least 9th level. Standard RPGA experience points.

LIVING DEATH™ EXTRAVAGANZA

The LIVING DEATH campaign coordinator, Claire Hoffman, has put together an exciting series of LIVING DEATH tournaments and an interactive. LIVING DEATH fans will want to play all events for the complete experience.

AD&D LIVING DEATH Enigma, one-round adventure. *On the Trail* by Keith Hoffman. You head to Hong Kong in August of 1892, following a stolen artifact! A LIVING DEATH adventure for heroes of any level. Third in the Jade Lotus Series. Standard RPGA experience points.

AD&D LIVING DEATH Feature, one-round adventure. *A Change of Heart* by John Richardson. Once again the White Rose calls on you. This time you are to investigate the disappearance of a woman in India. Is it an easily explained misunderstanding or a more sinister plot? Only you can determine this. A LIVING DEATH adventure for mid- to high-level heroes. Second in the Jade Lotus Series. Standard RPGA experience points.

AD&D LIVING DEATH Special, one-round adventure. *Mission to China* by Keith Hoffman. It is late in the summer of 1892, when you are sent on a secret mission into the mysterious Far East! A LIVING DEATH adventure for heroes of any level. Fourth in the Jade Lotus Series. Standard RPGA experience points.

ALTERNITY LIVING VERGE LAUNCH

GEN CON marks the launch of the LIVING VERGE campaign for the ALTERNITY Science-fiction Roleplaying Game. LIVING VERGE is set in the Marybelle system in the Verge, part of the STAR*DRIVE™ Campaign setting. Members have been working hard on this campaign, and we think you'll enjoy the different experience of adventuring in this science-fiction setting.

Alternity LIVING VERGE Preview, one-round adventure. *Whirlwind Tour* by Ramsey Lundock. Welcome to Marybelle, arrivers. This introductory adventure is the best place to get started in the Living Verge, the Network's very own Star*Drive campaign! This event premiered at Winter Fantasy, and has run at conventions throughout the summer. If you missed it, this is your chance to play the first LIVING VERGE adventure. Standard RPGA experience points.

Alternity LIVING VERGE Feature, one-round adventure. An out of the way survey trip turns up more than heavy metals. This adventure takes characters into the industrial spheres of the Marybelle system. If you are trying to play these events in order, this one is the first after the preview. Standard RPGA experience points.

Alternity LIVING VERGE Lighthouse, one-round adventure. The Lighthouse is in Argos this year! Do you want the good news first, or the bad news? The Lighthouse is a space construct described in the ALTERNITY accessory of the same name, and passes through the Verge once in a lifetime. Don't miss this opportunity. This event is the second in order for the LIVING VERGE events at Gen Con. Standard RPGA experience points.

Alternity LIVING VERGE Special, one-round adventure. *Salvage* by Thomas Reid. A simple salvage operation leads to complications. Standard RPGA experience points.

CALL OF CTHULHU MEGA-FEST

This year, the RPGA Network and Chaosium, Inc. have come together to present you with a program of Call of Cthulhu events unlike anything we've ever done before. In addition to the events below, we will be awarding RPGA experience for *every* Call of Cthulhu event sponsored by Chaosium, Inc. All of them. So get your fill of Cthulhu this year, and stop by an asylum on your way home to get some sanity back.

Call of Cthulhu Feature, two-round elimination. *Gray House on the Hill* by Robert Hobart. Being hardened Mythos investigators, you yearn for a rest from the insanity that you normally face every day. So when your friend Vincent's father died, and he went home to sort out the family affairs, you all decided to join him for some rest. But the Mythos is everywhere, and rest is hard to find for those who know things man was not meant to know.

Call of Cthulhu Special, one-round adventure. *Mythos Feasts of Ancient Rome* by Greg Detwiler. Ancient Rome is the setting for this expedition into Mythos madness. Senator Lucien Celeres Sextus has been stunning the town with the magnificence of his parties and lavish feasts. So stunned is the upper crust of Roman society that they are not questioning certain irregularities associated with Sextus.

NASCRAG

NASCRAG and the RPGA together are proud to present NASCRAG's 20th year of running AD&D tournaments at GEN CON.

NASCRAG AD&D Feature, three-round team elimination: *Conspiracy 101:Theory and Practice*. A secret organization summons six adventurers from different time periods to investigate one of its agents. Arm yourself with your wit and your humor! After all, it's a NASCRAG event! So stop peering over your shoulder and remember the password, "Al sent me."

4TH LAYER: TOURNAMENT CHAMPIONSHIPS

Leaving behind the lands of Cerberus, we enter Pluto's realm and discover championship tournaments to test your roleplaying mettle. Compete by yourself or as a team, and strive for the fame and prizes.

NATIONAL ROLEPLAYING CHAMPIONSHIP

This year marks the first running of the National Roleplaying Championship. Players qualified for this event through excellence in Classic tournament play, and it's invitation only. It will all come down to one winner, though, and the National Roleplaying Champion for 1999 will receive a free trip to GEN CON 2000, including transportation, admission, and a hotel room at the Hyatt Regency (or similiar accomdations). In addition, we'll

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throw in a great trophy to remember the experience, and brand new TSR product to allow the Champ to stay in practice. This year's tournament is *And Pearls Do Not Dissolve in the Mud* by Cyndi and Brett Bakke. Three-round elimination. Invitation only, Quintuple RPGA experience points.

AD&D OPEN

This is the pinnacle of AD&D team competition, and you don't want to miss it. Form a team in advance or on the spot, and go for the gold. The winning team members all get a plethora of new TSR product and the fame and glory that go with an AD&D Open win.

Under a Pale Green Sky by Reynolds Jones and Ruth Pinsky. The prince has been captured. As his friends, it is your duty to find him. The recent assassination of the king has left the land without a decisive leader, and barons and merchants fight for control. Is the same person behind both the kidnapping and the king's death, or is someone taking advantage of the situation? Three-round team elimination. Standard RPGA experience points.

NETWORK CLUBS CHAMPIONSHIP

Network Clubs have a chance to shine in their own two-round championship. This event is open to clubs only, so make sure you have a club formed before (or at) the convention if you want to get in on this action. For three years in a row the Company of the Framed Adventurers has taken the crown. Can you unseat them? Play *Business as Usual* by Greg Dreher, and find out. An RPGA Club Decathlon event.

VIRTUAL SEATTLE PRIME RUNNER CHAMPIONSHIP

The RPGA and FASA Corp present the Prime Runner Championship, an in-character championship for Shadowrun VIRTUAL SEATTLE characters. Qualify by scoring well in the VIRTUAL SEATTLE Feature and Special. The Prime Runner tournament will begin Saturday and crown a champion through in-character actions and roleplaying. We will be using the last three rounds of the *Mission: Seattle* tournament series for the championship, so if you've played them you're out of the running (sorry).

BEST LIVING™ CAMPAIGN PLAYER AND JUDGE

The player and judge with the best average scores in LIVING CITY, LIVING JUNGLE, LIVING DEATH, LIVING VERGE, Virtual Seattle, and Threads of Legend events receive a selection of brand new FORGOTTEN REALMS® products plus a trophy worth displaying to everyone who visits your house. You must play or judge six events to qualify, in at least three different LIVING Campaigns.

BEST OVERALL PLAYER AND JUDGE

The player and judge with the best average scores in all RPGA events will be named best player and judge in the Game Fair, and receive huge largesse in the form of TSR product and trophies. You must participate in at least six event rounds to get in the running.

5TH LAYER: LIVE-ACTION ROLE-PLAYING

Dis stands ahead of us, but first we stop to see live-action roleplaying. For the past few years the RPGA has flirted with Live-action Roleplaying games through our LIVING CITY interactives, and more recently through LIVING DEATH interactives. This year, we break the mold in a big way. If you like roleplaying, give some of these events a try.

AD&D FORGOTTEN REALMS LARP

A Strange Détente by Melissa Maurer. Lord Thelmaran thought that his days of excitement and danger had ended along with his adventuring career. However, after inheriting a small keep in a politically contentious area, he knows the truth: politics are more dangerous than a sharp sword. Determined to earn some peace and quiet, Lord Thelmaran has invited local dignitaries and old adventuring friends alike to his newly restored keep for a party. Well, maybe it wasn't such a good idea to have adventurers and dignitaries at the same function, but at least no one can complain of boredom....

This event will involve plotting and scheming among the dignitaries, a chance to explore the keep and perhaps find an entrance to underground warrens, contests among the attendees, and even some famous personalities of the Realms. The event is continuous from slot to slot, so on Friday you pick up where you left off Thursday. A different event number applies to each slot, to maximize flexibility. Thursday and Friday 12 pm, Saturday 8 am to 4pm. Labyrinth.

LIVING DEATH LARP

The Archaeological Society Annual Dinner by Claire Hoffman. The results of the Jasper-Petrie Expedition (from the GEN CON '98 adventure *Intrigue in Egypt*) will be presented as well as other papers and awards. Appropriate dinner costume is preferred. A LIVING DEATH interactive for heroes of all levels. This event occurs in conjunction with the RPGA dinner in slot 4, Thursday at 9 pm. Milwaukee Public Museum.

CALL OF CTHULHU LARP

Millenium Crisis by Greg Detwiler. As the new millenium dawns, natural and political disasters strike the planet. The reformed Soviet Bloc, the United States, NATO, and the Chinese factions all vie with each other to solve the problems and gain the upper hand in world domination. Is this the predicted end of the world, or just another growing pain on the way to the world of the future? Friday 9 pm. Labyrinth.

LIVING CITY INTERACTIVE

Summer Festival in Mossbridges. Join your friends in the LIVING CITY for the Summer Festival in Mossbridges. Take yourself to the Wizard's Guild, Clerical Circle, City Watch, and more. Enter a sporting competition and test your mettle. If the contests are too tame, you can enter the arena and battle fearsome monsters with your bare hands. Expect some surprises from around the Realms as well. Who knows what else you will find? Saturday 5pm to 1am. Hyatt Regency Ballroom.

ALTERNITY STAR*DRIVE LARP

"There's nothing really like it ... well, anywhere" say the travel guides. And with that ambiguous recommendation standing for it, you're welcome to "The Corner," part-watering hole, part-casino, and part-music lounge for heroes looking for a rest in the year 2502. Anything can happen here, and it usually does. This event is for all GEN CON attendees, but LIVING VERGE players can play their LIVING VERGE characters. Costume is recommended. Saturday 5 pm.

6TH LAYER: CHARITY ACTIVITIES

The River Styx safely behind us, we arrive somewhere really important: the layer of raising money for charity. WIZARDS OF THE COAST has designated the United Way as the official charity of the Game Fair. Through a vast network of volunteers and community service agencies, United Ways throughout America help meet the health and human-care needs of millions of people every day. United Way's 110-

year history is built on the proven effectiveness of local organizations helping people in their own communities. The United Way system includes approximately 1,400 community-based United Way organizations. Each is independent, separately incorporated, and governed by local volunteers. United Way volunteers ensure that every group receiving funds is a non-profit, tax-exempt charity. Specifically for our interests, United Way supports literacy and science education programs around the country. Your donations will help build the future.

The RPGA raises money for charity through benefit tournament games, auctions, and activities at the LIVING CITY interactive. Auctions this year will take place at the RPGA Members Meeting and the LIVING CITY Interactive. There are plenty of chances to get involved, and your giving brings such rewards. Last year we raised $13,000, and we can do at least as well this year.

7TH LAYER: SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS

Another river safely passed, this time the Phlegethon, we find ourselves in the land of learning. Whether you're an aspiring author, artist, or game master, nothing beats our workshop series for hands-on instruction in your field of choice. Register now for these events–space is limited to give each participant personal attention. Each workshop or series is led by an established professional in the field and provides participants with resource material to take home.

GAME MASTER TRAINING

Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, 2-4 pm

Never run a roleplaying game? We'll show you how. Veteran RPGA game masters present the basics of running roleplaying games and campaigns. From explaining what a game master actually does to showing you the basics, we guide you into the rewarding world of game mastering. We'll even give you practice. Complete all three sessions and receive a RPGA Game Master Diploma, and free starting products to help you start a campaign at home with your friends. Running the game can be more rewarding than playing a player character. This is your chance to learn to get behind the screen.

SECRETS OF SF GAME DESIGN

Thursday through Sunday, Noon to 1 pm

What makes a winning science fiction roleplaying scenario? How can you play out your favorite SF movies and TV shows-without your players ever getting wise? What does it take to create a vibrant yet believable game setting? Learn the secrets behind all these success strategies in our free daily game-design workshop. Leading each workshop is a team featuring one of the RPGA's veteran game masters paired up with one of our stellar guest authors. The seminars will be different each day because the participants will be different.

THE FUN OF SCIENCE FICTION GAMES

Saturday, 4-5 pm

Is the gaming scene still new to you (or to someone you're bringing to the show)? Well, get the basics from Science Fiction Saturday. "The Fun of Science Fiction Games," cosponsored with the Science Fiction Saturday Program, covers the gamut from card games to board games to roleplaying games. We know we can find the perfect game for you! If you enjoy reading about SF worlds, then try playing them too.

LIVING CAMPAIGN CHARACTER CREATION WORKSHOP

The RPGA has a plethora of LIVING Campaigns, and sometimes it can be a bit confusing to track what they are about, or to make a character and get involved. So, come to our character creation workshop and find out what it is all about. Our friendly staff will answer questions and help you get ready for LIVING Campaign games. Advancing your character through convention play is a big attraction for our LIVING Campaign games, so don't miss out. 8 am to 4 pm Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Arena.

8TH LAYER: SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

Geryon carries us swiftly to the 8th layer of the RPGA's inferno and the special social events that crown the weekend. These make GEN CON the Network's annual gathering and party. Make time for these activities.

RPGA ANNUAL MEMBERS MEETING

Wednesday 7 pm

All RPGA members are invited to attend the annual membership meeting in the Hyatt Regency Ballroom before the convention gets under way. The meeting includes a state of the Network address, a charity auction benefiting United Way charities, information about the weekend activities, and more. Meet Regional Directors and other members too. The charity auction includes special games with celebrity guests such as Ed Greenwood. Volunteers, judge coordinators, and marshals will meet at 6 pm.

RPGA LATE DINNER

Thursday 9 pm.

THe RPGA Dinner takes place at the Milwaukee Public Museum, three blocks from the convention. The LIVING DEATH LARP players will be in costume and sharing the Archaeological Society dinner while the rest of us share each other's company, listen to guests entertain you with stories of the gaming industry, and help honor those members who serve so hard during the year. The dinner will end by 10:30, but the LIVING DEATH game will continue.

ICE CREAM SOCIAL

Friday 9 pm

This special event is for GUILD-LEVEL RPGA members only. Come have free ice cream and socialize with friends. We may even have a surprise or two planned. Free ice cream ... as long as it lasts in the Inferno of members who will come. The ice cream will be in the labyrinth under Arena RPGA HQ.

AWARDS CEREMONY

Sunday 2 pm

The weekend culminates as we present awards to those who have won the championships, and thank those who worked so hard to bring us all the fun we shared. Please plan to stay for this final meeting, and cheer for the people who strove and won.

9TH LAYER: ???

On the final layer, there is only mystery. Truly, few come this far, but they are crucial to your enjoyment of the weekend. Those who come here have traversed all the other layers, and accepted the aid of Antaeus (who is here in disguise). But even if you don't make it this far, you can find plenty to occupy you and give you pleasure on the previous layers. Pick those activities that you would most enjoy and jump in with both feet. Don't jump into the River Styx, though, as you may not remember the weekend once you are done... ■

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make 'em wine!

ROLEPLAYING A NOT-SO-WELL-KNOWN SUBJECT *BY STEVE JAY*

Roleplaying elegant social situations should be more than just making an Etiquette proficiency roll. As with so many subjects, adding a little practical information can help provide material for many hours of enjoyable gaming. This article will provide some basic and practical information to add depth to role-playing wine knowledge. The information provided is drawn from the real world and should be considered a place to start with human-based societies.

HOW WINE IS MADE

Wine is usually defined as the fermented juice of grapes, which simply means that the juice sugar is metabolized into alcohol and carbon dioxide gas by some biological agent such as yeast. The process begins by lightly crushing the grapes to release their juices. The stereotype of treading on the grapes was meant not to press the juice from the grapes but to crush them so that fermentation could begin. The crushed red grapes are initially kept in huge vats made of cement, wood, or stainless steel.

The juice at this point is called must. The yeast cells required for fermentation are already present on the grape skins. As the sugar is converted to alcohol, color and a substance called tannin are pulled from the skins. Tannin is a natural preservative that gives red wine the longevity it needs to age and develop. The amount of color and tannin desired determine how long the skins are kept in contact with the must. A few days results in a light rose' (blush) with many of the fruit flavors remaining. Several weeks in contact with the must can result in a deep red wine with lots of tannin and far less fruit.

Fermentation continues until all the sugar is metabolized or until the alcohol content reaches 15 or 16 percent, at which point the alcohol kills the yeast cells. Wines generally have between 7 and 16 percent alcohol, with the norm being 10 to 14 percent.

After fermentation is complete the wines are transferred to barrels, casks, or even larger tanks to age. Red wine that drains freely from the tanks is called free-run. The remainder must be pressed from the remaining organic matter and is called press wine. Press wine tends to have more body and color, but is usually harsher and more tannic as well.

Red wine may be aged before bottling from a few weeks to three years. Longer aging is almost always done in oak casks, as the oak tends to mellow the harsh tannins and make the wine more drinkable. Oak casks can also add hints of spice, vanilla, and toast. New oak barrels tend to give the red wine a more pronounced taste.

White wine is made somewhat differently. Because it does not pick up color from the skins, it has less tannin. This absence of tannin is the primary taste difference between red and white wines. Slow, cool fermentation of white wine imparts a fruity, fresh taste. White wine is aged for a much shorter length of time than red wine. When it is fermented in oak the wine retains an oaky, richer, more complex taste. If aged in stainless steel, the wine usually acquires a creamy, smooth texture. This is because the wine has reacted with the stainless steel and produced lactic acid, the same kind of acid found in milk.

TASTING AND JUDGING THE WINE

The first attribute of a wine is color. Wine should be bright, free of any cloudiness. Wine that appears dull, especially if it is young, should be treated with suspicion. Cloudiness should not be confused with sediment, which will naturally fall to the bottom of the glass. Sediment is a natural by-product of older red wines, and can be decanted to remove it from the wine before serving. The hue, or intensity, of the color implies some of the wine's character. Watery or pale-looking wine probably means a wine that won't stand up to age or food, much as watery coffee won't stand up to that first taste in the morning. To judge the hue of the wine, don't look into the glass, as the depth of the glass will affect its color. Tip the glass away from you and look against the edge of the wine against a light source or white backdrop.

The second attribute of wine is aroma. Aroma gives you a strong first impression of its flavor. If a wine has any serious faults, you can often tell without ever tasting it. Smells of mold, sulphur, acid or vinegar are strong warning signs that something has gone wrong.

Finally, it is time to taste the wine. All wines have varying degrees of sweetness, and everyone's perception of sweetness varies. Someone used to very sweet drinks may find a particular wine to be dry, while someone else may describe the same wine as sweet. Also, cold tends to reduce the sensation of sweetness in wine.

Acidity (tartness) is essential in wine, especially white wine. It allows the wine to age. But there is a balance to acidity, just as there is a balance between acidity and sugar in lemonade.

Bitterness or an astringent, puckerish taste common in young reds comes from an overabundance of tannins. Sometimes this just means the red wine needs to age, but a strong tannic taste could mean that the wine will never develop or mature.

Many of the same considerations go with serving wine to guests as go with the serving of bread, so you might apply some of the logic in the "Medieval Food Fights" article when adding wine to your roleplaying game situations. Enjoy! ■

The sun slipped past its zenith as we made the summit of Storm Mountain. We set up camp on a grassy knoll overlooking our final destination: the ruins of Split Rock, an ancient dwarven hold. The better part of the day had passed while we climbed and now everyone around me groaned and winced as they pulled tight boots from swollen feet and tended to the blisters and raw spots thus revealed. Everyone, that is, except the gnome Belger. The chubby little thief skipped around, cheerily humming – HUMMING! – as he unpacked cookware and rations, preparing his own little feast. Annoyed, I commented "You must think it a fine joke to endure such discomfort simply to mock our pain."

The normally jovial gnome turned to me with a look of confusion and hurt. "I meant no joke, good ranger. It is just that I have been spared the aches of the climb. How much you value an enchanted blade or spellcrafted wand, but neglect the very things that carry you into battle or dungeons deep!" And with that he held his booted foot aloft and pointed to it before turning back with a huff to his cookfire.

- FROM THE JOURNALS OF THE RANGER VELENOR FAIRWIND, DR 1357.

BOOTS OF TRACKING

By placing a foot on a footprint (or hoofprint, etc), the wearer can track the creature that left the print for the next full hour as if possessing the tracking non-weapon proficiency at a rating of 19. The track is lost if the quarry leaves the plane of existence that the boot wearer is on, although the wearer will have a feeling of the plane traveled to or magic used. This restriction includes extraplanar transportation spells such as *teleport, dimension door, phase shift*, and others. XP value: 1,000, GP value: 5,000.

CIRILAN'S SCALY SLIPPERS

Named after the wizard who first created them, this footwear appears as lightweight slippers crafted from sealskin, sharkskin, eelskin, or some other aquatic leather. When the wearer is immersed completely underwater, the slippers magically transform into flippers which enable the character to swim at a rate of 18 per round. The duration of this effect is unlimited so long as the character stays completely underwater, however the slippers do not provide the means to breathe underwater. XP value: 1,500, GP value: 7,500.

there's magic afoot

MAGICAL BOOTS FOR YOUR AD&D® CAMPAIGN *BY GARY WATKINS*

The magical footwear noted below is usable by any class without restriction and will expand or contract to fit anyone from brownies to giants.

BOOTS OF DUST

These magical boots enable their owner to pass without trace (as the spell of that name). A +1 bonus to surprise others is also gained and, if the wearer is a thief or ranger, +25% is added to the chance to move silently. XP value: 1,000, GP value: 5,000.

BOOTS OF COWARDICE

A pair of these boots will behave like *boots of speed* until the wearer suffers damage in battle. At such a time the boots reveal their true nature. They force the wearer to flee at full speed (24") for one round, no saving throw allowed. Thereafter, the wearer is entitled to a saving throw vs. wands each round to regain control of the boots. The boots' magic is reactivated whenever damage is suffered. A successful remove curse spell vs. 12th level magic will enable the wearer to be rid of the boots. XP value: Nil, GP value: Nil.

BOOTS OF SAFE TRAVEL

These boots are highly sought for their protective qualities by rangers, thieves, and scouts. They grant a bonus of +10% to the distance a character can travel each day. By setting foot on a structure (i.e. bridge, tree limb, floor, etc) and concentrating for one round, the wearer can determine whether the structure can safely support the wearer's weight. Lastly, whenever the wearer approaches (knowingly or unknowingly) within 10' of pits, snares, tripwires, or even quicksand, the character is allowed a saving throw vs. spells. If successful, the wearer immediately detects the hazard. XP value: 2,500, GP value: 20,000.

SERPENT SLIPPERS

Serpent slippers radiate a strong aura of alteration magic if such is detected for. Serpent slippers are always fashioned out of snakeskin. Once per day, the wearer can put his or her feet together and, by mental command, transform into a snake, gaining the creature's physical traits—armor class, movement, attack forms, and sensory abilities. The character retains his/her own hit points, saving throws, and combat rolls. Each pair of serpent slippers can transform the wearer into only one type of snake, and the DM determines the type when the slippers are first discovered. Venomous varieties are possible. The length and weight of the snake form is dependent on its type, and is not affected by the size of the character whatsoever. The transformation can be maintained for up to eight hours at a time. XP value: 1,000, GP value: 5,000.

SHOES OF MANY FOOTFALLS

These enchanted shoes enable the wearer to alter the sounds of his or her footfalls. Several options are available, including: muffle the sound so as to improve the chance to surprise others by 1 on a d6, add 20% to a thief's or ranger's chance to move silently, cause the wearer's footsteps to recede or approach in whatever direction the wearer wishes (regardless of the direction of travel), or amplify or mute the volume of the wearer's footsteps to sound like anything from the soft padding of halfling feet to a horse's clip-clopping gait to the thundering stomp of a giant. Each power can be used one at a time, once per round.

The shoes of many footfalls have one other power of note. Once per week the wearer can create a shockwave by stomping. The shockwave does 2-16 points of damage to any creature standing within 30' of the wearer. Additionally, affected creatures must make a successful save vs. paralyzation or be knocked off of their feet and stunned for one round. Fortifications in the area of effect suffer 1 point of structural damage. The shoes' wearer is immune to the shockwave's ill effects. XP value: 1,500, GP Value: 7,500. ■

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food fight!

FOOD-RELATED ROLE-PLAYING OPPORTUNITIES BY GREGORY DETWILER

Eating during the Middle Ages was very much a suspense-filled operation, and not merely because so many people—in particular the peasantry—did not know for certain where their next meal was coming from. The very nature of medieval society brought with it a number of situations that to our modern eyes were quite novel, and which can put PCs in situations where the stroke of a sword or the casting of a *fireball* would be an inappropriate response. This article seeks to detail some of those potential adventures, which can liven up a campaign that places at least some emphasis on roleplaying and local intrigue.

"LET'S BUTCHER THE BAKER!"

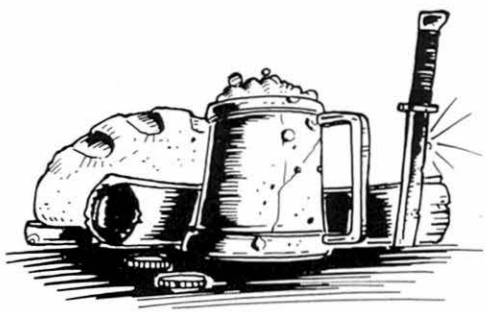
The simple act of preparing a meal, in particular the baking of bread, takes on an entirely new degree of difficulty in medieval times, both in rural and urban settings. We'll handle the rural setting first because it's quickest. In its simplest form, the problem is this: in a feudal society, the peasants not only have no ovens, but are absolutely forbidden to bake bread at home, even improvising with such inventions as a covered hole in the ground. The lord had the only oven in his territory, and all peasants had to take their flour (which could only be milled from grain at the lord's own mill) to his castle to be baked. Needless to say, they had to pay for this privilege, either in money or simply a percentage of the loaves they baked. The village policeman, or reeve, was constantly on patrol, and anyone caught baking at home would be fined. Those PCs who manage to become feudal lords or other rural landowners will have to spend a surprising amount of their non-adventuring time strictly enforcing the "no ovens for peasants" rule, and if this sounds too silly for you to waste your time on, remember that you get paid for the use of your own oven! Extorting money from the peasantry in this manner may not be as glamorous as looting a dragon's lair, but it is considerably safer.

In urban areas, people would often go to the baker either to buy something to eat or simply bring their own food in to be baked in his oven. Thus, the baker was a pillar of the community, but he was not well liked because far too many bakers took advantage of their positions to cheat their customers. It was commonly noted that all the lazy and incompetent people in a community tended to become bakers because that trade was thought to be an easy one, and this misconception often showed itself in the quality of their products. How bad was it? Consider the following medieval proverb: "In the oven of a lazy baker the dough freezes."

Outright fraud took many forms, but the most common tactic was taking the customer's money for one product and fobbing off cheaper substitutes on him. Spice merchants, along with bakers, were particularly noted for this tactic. Bringing your own materials in to be cooked by a professional would seem to negate this tactic, but alas, a clever if unscrupulous cook could even find a way around this obstruction. For your edification, I give you the example of the short-weight loaves.

In 1327, a London baker named John Brid had a fair-sized "waiting room", where customers could sit with their dough while awaiting their turn with his oven. While sitting, their bread dough was placed on a molding-board, whose lid looked like a solid piece of wood (which it was supposed to be). However, in Brid's case—and we don't know how many others—a circular piece of wood had been cut out of the board, to be replaced by a wooden lid. John Brid had a servant hidden beneath the molding-board, and while the hapless customer waited, this servant would remove the lid from below, stick his hand through the hole, and twist off a piece of soft, fresh dough. The pile of bread dough thus obtained could be baked up and sold as Brid's own bread, without his having gone to the trouble and expense of paying for the ingredients.

Once cases like this were uncovered, the medieval authorities did what they could to crack down on frauds, but their abilities were limited. For instance, some local officials tried to uncover the would-be John Brids of their neighborhoods by weighing each loaf of bread that was baked. On at least one occasion, a quick-thinking apprentice saved the day for his master by slipping a hunk of iron into a sample loaf that was to be tested; unfortunately, the records do not state whether it was slipped out again before the loaf was put on sale.



All this may seem like small stuff to players whose characters take on everything from wild animals and enemy soldiers to giants and dragons, and it is, but by its very nature, it is also the sort of thing they are likely to run into every day of their lives. Also remember that little stuff like this is not likely to lend itself to the kind of gory punishments most PCs like to mete out to those who wrong them. "But my lord, I had to fireball his bakery; he cheated me by selling me lightweight loaves of bread, and made from my own dough, too!" If said bakery was the only one in town, the local ruler is most unlikely to buy this argument, especially if a number of nearby buildings also went up in smoke. Even the most kill-crazy "hack and slash" gamers will have to show some ingenuity and make the punishment fit the crime.

Detecting frauds may not be easy, even if magic is (theoretically) available, as spellcasters are scarce, while the demands on their time are numerous. For instance, in a walled city or town which must constantly be vigilant for any sign of attack, which is the local cleric most likely to use detect lie for: to find out if a newcomer is an enemy spy, or to see if the local baker is stealing a bit off the top (or bottom) of each loaf he bakes?

In wartime, matters are exacerbated by the fact that the local authorities have many more urgent demands on their time. When the humanoid hordes are camped outside the city, how many constables or nobles will have the time or inclination to listen to complaints about incompetent or dishonest bakers? Indeed, for all your characters may know, they could secretly be in league with them, reaping a share of their illegal profits. Even if only one official in town is corrupt, the DM's quest for adventure ideas makes it a certainty that this lone official will be the one your PCs complain to. This can lead to banishment, imprisonment, or worse, due to trumped-up charges of spying, cowardice, or treason, all to keep the official and his allies from losing their spot in the illegal gravy train.

What sort of response can the PCs make to this sort of abuse? Finding some clever means of making the baker's fraud as public as possible should do the trick, as even the most corrupt public official will then turn on his partner to save his own skin. A common medieval punishment of erring bakers was to drag the scoundrel along the dirtiest streets of town, with a loaf of his own bread hung around his neck. A public humiliation it was, but most bakers learned to put up with it as an inevitable hazard of doing business. After all, they had a vital but dirty job that nobody else wanted, least of all the local nobility, so if they were "removed" one way or the other, who would be willing to take their places?

Sabotaging the bakery in ways more subtle than simply casting a *fireball* inside should be high on any vengeful PC's agenda. Perhaps the baker is only a dishonest trader with the common people, exerting himself to the utmost to provide the powers that be with the best in good eating. If your enemy was helping to cater the Lord Mayor's birthday party or some similar festive occasion, it would be an extremely inopportune time for the wrong sort of ingredients to get mixed into his food; say, a dessert where, for some inexplicable reason, large quantities of salt were added in instead of sugar. This could be accomplished by a reasonably nimble-fingered rogue, or by a wizard with access to a spell such as *telekinesis* or *teleport*, or perhaps just a simple *cantrip*. Priests, of course, can simply cast the reversible version of purify food and drink. And if you can somehow wrangle an invitation to the feast, or at least get a good vantage point to see the Lord Mayor's face and the baker's reaction to it, do so; the results will be well worth it.

Don't think your characters will have to bother with this sort of thing? Think again, particularly in the early stages of a campaign when the PCs are low-level and relatively poor. Players hate it when their characters get ripped off financially, and this is the sort of thing that can start a series of adventures against a long-term antagonist. Naturally, it's not as thrilling as going up against a powerful lord, wizard, or huge ancient dragon, but by way of compensation, you have a greater chance of running into multiple antagonists of this sort, to say nothing of the fact that such an enemy can appear at the very start of the campaign, without the risk of immediately killing off the entire party. Low-level antagonisms make for great background, at least in campaigns where roleplaying is encouraged. "Let's see, the Lord Mayor's birthday is tonight. Can I sneak into Baker Bungler's place and 'rearrange' his ingredients in time to spoil the festivities before meeting the rest of the party to explore that ancient crypt at midnight?"

An evil baker or other food supplier may not always be so harmless a foe, particularly if poison is available. This threat is so obvious that no more needs to be said about it, except that if the enemy's ingredients get mixed up on such an occasion, good-aligned PCs might want to help the survivors of any customers who accidentally get the poisoned food or drink that was meant for them.

Some magic spells require spices as a material component, while fine wine might be needed to help mix a potion. In such cases, a dishonest supplier can get not merely a single character killed, but the entire party. If your wizard or priest intends to brew up magic potions, take the Herbalism proficiency; you're going to need it. On the non-magical front, consider bringing a gift of fine foods or rare spiced wine to an important NPC, be he a baron or a giant,

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and also consider the consequences of getting the wrong ingredients. If the hero Odysseus had been stuck with a supply of bad wine when he encountered the cyclops Polyphemus, he would have been killed at almost the very start of Homer's *Odyssey*. Think about it.

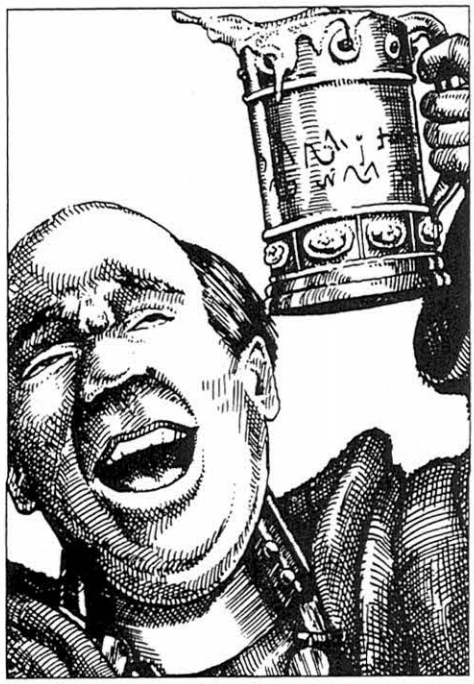
"YOU'RE SERVING WHAT TYPE OF BREAD?"

In all but the most unusual campaigns, bread will be the daily staff of life, and as such, it has a peculiar role to fill whenever a banquet is being held. Most games do not give different types of bread in the food section of their equipment lists. In that case, we can assume that the bread is white wheaten bread unless the game book itself specifically states otherwise. White wheaten bread is the finest bread there is, but it is not the only type that can be baked—far from it. In fact, there is an entire spectrum of breads that can be baked, from pure wheaten loaves to breads that have the wheat mixed with cheaper substitutes such as barley, rye, and oats, to breads made entirely of those lesser grains, to the very bottom of the rung with gritty breads made of beans, peas, or bran. Ambitious game masters may want to come up with a new price scale for the entire group of breads, for this sort of thing is useful, believe it or not, in roleplaying.

During the Middle Ages, all guests were not created equal, or treated equally by their hosts. One of the most common means of determining a guest's status with his host was the type of bread he received. White wheaten bread was given to the most favored guests, and bean bread or the like was served to those the host would just as soon see fall off the edge of the world. Thus, without a word being spoken or a single gesture being made, guests at the banquet table could quickly and easily determine their relative social status by comparing the bread they were served with that of their fellows. Quantity counts as well as quality. A favored servant who gets all the bean bread he can eat may thus stand higher in his lord's esteem than an unpleasant fellow nobleman who gets wheaten bread because he is a noble, but only a crust or so. Even quality depends not merely on the contents of the bread, but also its age. A piping hot, fresh-baked loaf of white wheaten bread delivered to your plate is the ultimate compliment. By contrast, if you decide to crash the party and get a tiny crust of bean bread whose odor rather strongly announces its age, run, don't walk, for the exit.

This sort of thing has potential, particularly for a live-action gaming session where roleplaying is all the rage and combat severely discouraged. If the event includes a feast, the organizers merely have to drop in at the local supermarket and gather bread from both the regular bakery section and the racks of old stuff set out separately for quick sale. Make sure the players are briefed on the "bread-as-status-symbol" aspects of medieval life before play commences, including the social desirability of the various types of bread, and set them down at the dinner table. Serve out the bread as the first course, and without any words or gestures, each player will know the precise social standing of his character with a single glance at his plate, as well as how helped or handicapped he will be when he tries to wheel and deal with his host—and everyone else, for that matter. It is simple, cheap to prepare as props go, and oh, so subtle!

Subtlety goes out the window, of course, if some loudmouth starts complaining about what he received, and if your players (or their characters) want to make fools of themselves in public in this manner, then let them. If nothing else, it could help let everyone else know why



their status is as low as it is. After all, taking revenge will be hindered by the innocuous nature of the offense. How many players think their PCs could get away with chopping their host's head off or turning him into a toad merely because he served them rye bread instead of wheat?

If you're playing the host in a roleplaying session, either live-action or a table-top game, then you have a minor nightmare on your hands as you play the master of ceremonies. After all, how your guests react to you depends in large part on what type of bread you serve them, so you will have to make intricate calculations on what to serve each individual, with those calculations based not merely on the type of bread being served, but also its quantity and age. If you make a mistake, or the servants serving the food make a mistake, the results could be disastrous.

Mistakes will be forthcoming, and not entirely of your own making. PCs in all campaigns tend to acquire enemies, all of whom would like nothing better than to see the PC fall flat on his or her face due to some social gaffe. Infiltrating henchmen or hirelings into your kitchen staff to serve, deliberately, the wrong type of bread to one or more guests is a threat that cannot be taken lightly. Failing that, your foe could attempt to turn one of your own servants against you via bribery, coercion, seduction, or a simple charm person or suggestion spell. Given the hot-blooded nature of most noblemen, a miscalculation in who gets what kind of bread at an important banquet can easily lead to violence, and the PCs may look back on "The Great Bean Bread War" with wonder and amazement long after the campaign has come to a close.

Insult an important NPC at the very first banquet you can afford to throw, and you might wind up making yourself one of those long-term enemies. Pride being what it is, your "victim" might make attempts at revenge out of all proportion to the slight in anyone else's mind but his own. The theme of this part of the campaign could well be "Make one mistake, and pay for it the rest of your life!" If you don't think a loaf of bread is worth all that trouble, I suggest you sit down some quiet non-gaming evening and read *Les Miserables*.

If the bread was deliberately switched at the banquet by a treacherous servant, then you really have two long-term enemies in the campaign from this event. That being the case, you could spend much of your time trying to expose the fellow, not merely to punish him, but to get the other guy off your back. No more memorable conclusion to the campaign can be imagined than for you to place yourself in lethal jeopardy exposing the true villain of the piece, only to be rescued by the suddenly-penitent foe who has been gunning for you for years of game-world time. And if he gets himself killed in the process and begs for forgiveness with his dying breath, there may not be a dry eye at the gaming table.

As you eat your famed "daily bread" at your next meal, I suggest you remember the complications that your medieval predecessors went through to do the same thing. Those complications considerably enlivened their lives, and similar ones can do the same in a roleplaying game, whether for a single night's session or for the entire campaign.

REFERENCE

Fast and Feast: Food in Medieval Society; Henisch, Bridget Ann; 1976; Pennsylvania State University Press; University Park and London. Henisch's book could well be titled "Everything You Wanted to Know About Medieval Meals, and a Whole Lot More!" It has chapters covering everything from the number of meals to the problems of Lenten fasting, bakeries, table settings, and of course the food. ■

RUSALKA

BY BARBARA R. TYSINGER AND CARLA HOLLAR OF ARC FELLOWSHIP

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	River banks/ Shorelines
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any (Usually at dawn or dusk, or in foggy or cloudy conditions)
DIET:	None
INTELLIGENCE:	High (13-14)
TREASURE:	W (x Rusalka's age in years)
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic Neutral – Chaotic Evil

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	0 (8)
MOVEMENT:	9
HIT DICE:	7
THACO:	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	0
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	0
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Embrace, control water
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	50%
SIZE:	M
MORALE:	Champion (15-16)
LEVEL/XP VALUE:	1,000

The rusalka (plural rusalki) is the spirit of a drowning victim, usually a woman, who was murdered. Most rusalki desire revenge on their murderer, and will do all in their power to gain this revenge. This is not always easy since the spirit of the rusalka is tied to the body of water in which it was drowned. If the rusalka is successful in its quest for revenge, it will cease to be bound to the Prime Material plane and will be released to rest in peace. As time passes the rusalka's alignment shifts further and further toward Chaotic Evil. Thus, a recently manifested rusalka will retain some of the memories of its former self, but a rusalka of long standing is a being of almost purely Chaotic Evil, whose only thoughts are revenge on the one who put her here. Male rusalki are sometimes called Vodyanik.

Rusalki retain the general appearance they had in life, and anyone who knew them in life should be able to recognize them. They usually appear to be dressed in the clothing they were wearing when drowned, although the colors are washed out to a faded, watery green. They have pale complexions with a greenish tint and long greenish-blond to green hair, which may appear to have water plants woven into it.

Combat: All rusalki will attempt to lure their victims to their deaths with siren songs, or tangle the nets of fishermen and overturn their boats, drowning them in a watery embrace. The song of the rusalka is enticing, and their forms are beautiful and welcoming, but neither their song nor their appearance have any magical allure. All those seeing a rusalka, except for the murderer, may choose to approach or to avoid them of their own free will. If the murderer of the mortal who has became a rusalka sees the rusalka, he must save vs. spell or be drawn into the rusalka's embrace.

Rusalki become semi-material upon contact with air, assuming human form. They must be in this form to embrace their victims. Rusalki are AC 0 while semi-material, and can only be struck by magical weapons (full damage), or by normal or magical fire (half damage). Rusalki can also be attacked on the Ethereal plane, where they are AC 8. Rusalki can be turned like regular ghosts, but holy water has no effect on them.

Anyone who touches or is touched by the rusalka is subject to its embrace. The rusalka's embrace pulls its victim beneath the water, causing a victim to drown unless a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon is made. The murderer must make this save with a -3 penalty. The victim may be revived if removed from the rusalka's embrace (and from the water) and some means of resuscitation is applied within five rounds of being drowned. Those who successfully avoid the embrace must also make a swimming proficiency check or a strength check to break free. The saving throw vs. breath weapon must be repeated each round until the victim either breaks free, is pulled under, or is released by the rusalka.

Rusalki can control water within 10 feet; they can use waves to slow movement to 1/4 normal and increase chances of drowning by 10%.

As soon as the rusalka takes any damage, it will release any embraced victims, disappear back into the water, and reappear again 15 feet further out into the lake. Any who follow will be subject to the control water attack. Those who follow are slowed to 1/4 normal movement. They must also make a swimming proficiency check at -2 each round or be pulled under the water.

When a rusalka's hit points drop to 5% of its total, the rusalka will withdraw to the Ethereal Plane, where it will remain for 1 year gathering enough energy to re-manifest in the Prime Material Plane. If the rusalka is pursued into the Ethereal Plane it can be "killed" there, but the spirit thus released becomes a true, free-ranging ghost, and as such, it will do all in its power to seek out and destroy its original murderer.

Habitat /Society: Rusalki are found in any climate or region capable of sustaining open bodies of water, but seem to be more common in ponds, streams and small lakes of the more temperate climates. Rusalki usually appear within 5 feet of the shoreline, near the spot where they were murdered, but may appear anywhere in "their" body of water. They cannot come onto dry land, but can manifest in water as shallow as 1 inch deep, thus the occasional reports of rusalki who "walk" the shoreline or who sit by the edge of the water.

Ecology: Rusalki do not contribute to the environment in any way. Various coins and items of jewelry can often be found submerged in the shallows or covered with a layer of sediment near places where rusalki are known to appear. These items are all that is left of the rusalka's victims, and as such, increase with the passing of the years. ■

RUSALKA

BY MARK TEMPLETON OF OSQUIP

	Lesser Rusalka	Greater Rusalka
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Temperate shores	Temperate shores
FREQUENCY:	Rare	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Pack	Pack
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Constant	Constant
DIET:	Nil	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (5-7)	Average (8-10)
TREASURE:	0	Mx2, X
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral Evil	Neutral Evil
NO. APPEARING:	1-8	1
ARMOUR CLASS:	8	6
MOVEMENT:	9, Sw 12	9, Sw 12
HIT DICE:	3	5
THACO:	17	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3 (claw/claw/bite)	3 (claw/claw/bite)
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d3/1d3/1d4+1	1d4/1d4/1d6+1
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	+2 save vs fire	+2 save vs fire
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	M	M
MORALE:	Fanatic (17-18)	Fanatic (17-18)
XP VALUE:	250	500

Rusalki are female undead who haunt bodies of water in temperate regions. A lesser rusalka is created when a female human or demi-human is drowned by either variety of rusalka. This new rusalka is then under the control of the pack leader (a greater rusalka, or the lesser rusalka with the most hit points). A new rusalka retains the physical characteristics she had in life. For example, an elf would be have a light build and pointed ears, a dwarf would be stout and have a beard. In undeath, the rusalka's skin becomes pale, bloated and slightly scaled. Her most noticeable feature is her eyes, which burn with green fire.

For every pack there is an 80% chance that one of the rusalka will be the greater variety. If a greater rusalka is present, she will always be pack leader. In her true form, a greater rusalka appears much like her lesser companions, but with tougher skin and a more intense fire in her eyes. The true form of a greater rusalka is rarely seen due to a permanent illusion surrounding her. This illusion causes the viewer to see an image of the fairest possible female that his or her mind can concoct, clad in only a robe of mist. True seeing, a gem of seeing, or a robe of eyes will allow the viewer to see the greater rusalka's true form.

Combat: The tactics of the rusalki vary depending on whether or not there is a greater rusalka in the pack. If the pack consists entirely of lesser rusalki, they will hide on land close to the water. There they will wait until someone passes nearby, at which time they will attack. Their first action will be to use their gaze attack on one creature with which they are engaged in melee. They can use their gaze attack once per day, with the effect of ray of enfeeblement as cast by a 3rd level mage. They will then proceed to attack with their sharp nails and teeth.

If a greater rusalka is in the pack, she will lure victims into the water where the others hide in waiting. She does this through the use of an audio illusion, a singing voice so sweet it would put an elven minstrel to shame. This song charms (save vs spell to negate) humanoids into approaching its source from up to 30' away. When they come into view of the greater rusalka, they see her (or rather the illusion) standing at the edge of the water. Those males not already charmed must make another save vs spell, with a -2 penalty, or be charmed as well. If unaffected by the charms, the viewer sees past the illusion and retains free will. Those charmed must follow the greater rusalka into the water. When the victim is waist-deep, the lesser rusalki surface behind the victim and attack. As their first attack, both variety of rusalki will attempt to overbear the closest victims and hold them underwater until they drown. If this fails, they will use their gaze attacks and engage in regular melee. The gaze attack of the greater rusalki has the effect of the spell eyebite cast by a 5th level mage using the sicken option. The greater rusalki can use their gaze attack 3 times per day, though multiple uses on the same target have no effect.

If a female human or demihuman drowns in the hands of a rusalka, she will rise as a lesser rusalka in six turns unless a remove curse is cast on the body. If a female dies by means other than drowning, she escapes the horrible fate. The pack leader eats all those who die and do not rise as lesser rusalki, including all males.

Lesser rusalki can be turned as 5 HD undead. Greater rusalki can be turned as 9 HD undead.

Habitat/Society: Rusalki are organized into packs of lesser rusalki led by a greater rusalka. Should the greater rusalka die, the lesser rusalka with the most hit points takes the role as leader. They all walk onto dry land and await a victim. The first humanoid to have the misfortune of coming across them is attacked. The carcass is then fed to the pack leader. After finishing her meal, the pack leader will begin transforming into a greater rusalka. None but the pack leader is allowed to eat at this strange ritual.

Ecology: No one knows where the rusalki menace came from. The most popular theory is that some girl long ago insulted a god. This god caused the girl to fall into a river and drown. She was then cursed to return as an undead. The girl was horror-stricken and she applied the same punishment to anyone who saw her, thus passing the curse along. Whatever their origins, rusalki are unnatural and are not a part of the natural ecology. ■

The 1999 Club Decathlon, one of the RPGA's programs to get clubs more involved in roleplaying, produced some fine entries in the various game writing categories. In the Best AD&D® Monster category, these two versions of the rusalka tied for first place. Use either, or both, in your home campaigns. The rusalka is a creature out of Russian folklore, and we encourage you to find out more about it at your library or on the web.

Gen Con Game Fair '99 - RPGA Schedule

Event Type	Title	Marshall Area	Thursday Slot 1 8:00 AM	Thursday Slot 2 12:00 PM	Thursday Slot 3 5:00 PM	Thursday Slot 4 9:00 PM	Friday Slot 5 8:00 AM	Friday Slot 6 12:00 PM	Friday Slot 7 5:00 PM	Friday Slot 8 9:00 PM	Saturday Slot 9 8:00 AM	Saturday Slot 10 12:00 PM	Saturday Slot 11 5:00 PM	Saturday Slot 12 9:00 PM	Sunday Slot 13 8:00 AM	Sunday Slot 14 12:00 PM	Cost
AD&D - Open	Under a Pale Green Sky-Rd1	S		80	81	82		83	84	85	86						$2.50
	Under a Pale Green Sky-Rd2	S										ADV	ADV				
	Under a Pale Green Sky-Rd3	S													ADV		
AD&D - Feature	Pirate's Life-Rd1	L	90		91		92		93								$2.50
	Pirate's Life-Rd2	L									ADV	ADV					
	Pirate's Life-Rd3	L													ADV		
AD&D - National	Pearls in the Mud-Rd1	E	97				98										$2.50
	Pearls in the Mud-Rd2	E											ADV				
	Pearls in the Mud-Rd3	E													ADV		
AD&D - Masters	Gifts of the Heart-Rd1	E			101					102		103					$2.50
	Gifts of the Heart-Rd2	E												ADV			
AD&D - Grand Masters	Fine Specimen	E							105		106						$2.50
AD&D - Paragon	Aw Dad ...	E		107				108									$2.50
AD&D - Benefit	Wand of Archael	Q	109						110	111		112		113			$5.00
AD&D - Special	The Rescue of Maid Marian	Q			114		115				116						$2.50
AD&D - Replay	Parlynne's Lost Gem	Q		117				118					119		120		$2.50
AD&D - Team	Business as Usual-Rd1	P	121				122										$2.50
	Business as Usual-Rd2	P									ADV						
Living City - Benefit	The Witch of the Mist	B		124			125		126			127			128		$5.00
Living City - Feature	Lacquered Chest	B			129			130		131	132		133				$2.50
Living City - Exclusive	Heir Un-apparent	H	134				135				136			137			$2.50
Living City - Masters	Challenge of the Children	H								138		139			140		$2.50
Living City - HLP	Three Coins in a Well	H						141									$5.00
Living City - HLU	The Isle of the End	H		142													$5.00
Living Jungle - Feature	Necromancer's Stone	J		191			192					193					$2.50
Living Jungle - Extreme	Monkey City	J			194				195						196		$2.50
Living Death - Feature	A Change of Heart	F	197	198													$2.50
Living Death - Enigma	On the Trail	F						199		200							$2.50
Living Death - Special	Mission to China	F											201		202		$2.50
Living Verge - Preview	Whirwind Tour	D	203				204										$2.50
Living Verge - Feature	Living Verge #1	D		205				206			207						$2.50
Living Verge - Special	Living Verge #2	D			208					209			210				$2.50
Living Verge - Lighthouse	Living Verge #3	D										211		212	213		$2.50
Virtual Seattle - Feature	Stolen Property	N	214				215				216						$2.50
Virtual Seattle - Special	Body Farm	N		217				218					219				$2.50
Virtual Seattle - Prime	Mission: Culture Shock-Rd1	N										220					$2.50
	Mission: Collateral Damage-Rd2	N												ADV			
	Mission: Broken Play-Rd3	N													ADV		
SAGA DL5A - Feature	Hammers Fall	L		223						224							$2.50
SAGA DL5A - Special	Siren's Song and Dragon's Breath	L						225						226			$2.50
Star Wars - Feature	The Way of the Force	J	227							228			229				$2.50
Dark Conspiracy - Feature	Thoughts Run Wild	N			230				231								$2.50
Call of Cthulhu - Feature	Gray House on the Hill-Rd1	A			232			233			234						$2.50
	Gray House on the Hill-Rd2	A											ADV	ADV			
Call of Cthulhu - Special	Mythos Feasts of Ancient Rome	A		237			238		239								$2.50
SAGA Marvel - Feature	Pages of Doom	P			240							241		242			$2.50
LC Interactive	Summer Festival in Mossbridges	Hyatt											243				$5.00
LD LARP	The Archaeological Society Annual Dinner	Hyatt				244											$2.50
AD&D LARP	A Strange Détente	LARP area		245				247			248	249					$2.50
Cthulhu LARP	Millenium Crisis	LARP area								246							$2.50
Earthdawn - TOL	Twisting Through a Fountains Screams	LARP area					254							255			$2.50
Rolemaster - Feature	Shadow in Hope-Rd1	K	472	256	258			259	260	473							$2.50
	Shadow in Hope-Rd2	K									ADV	ADV					
	Shadow in Hope-Rd3	K												ADV			
Run out the Guns	Bretheren of the Coast Raid-a-thon-Rd1	T		264	265	266		267	268	269		270	271	272			$2.50
	Bretheren of the Coast Raid-a-thon-Rd2	T													ADV		
NASCRAG	Conspiracy 101:Theory and Practice-Rd1	PP		274	275			276		277							$2.50
	Conspiracy 101:Theory and Practice-Rd2	PP										ADV					
	Conspiracy 101:Theory and Practice-Rd3	PP												ADV			

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